

# Match Report

**Bromley 19 v Maidstone 25**

**by Trevor Langley**

**League: London 3 SE**

Away at Bromley, Saturday 15 September, 2012 Kick Off – 3.00 pm

Maidstone came into this game last year underprepared, physically and mentally, and coach, Andy Foley, had no intention this should happen again. But this was no walk in the park and Maidstone's 25-19 victory was hard earned.

Forward dominance shown by the Maidstone pack should have been sufficient to allow the game to have been out of sight in the first half but a combination of poor ball retention and a spate of penalties, conceded on their own goal line by Bromley, strangely unpunished with a yellow card, denied the visitors a number of tries when in promising positions.



But with two closely fought games in succession, the Maidstone team is beginning to look battle hardened, with skipper, Ben Williams, increasingly pulling the strings on the field. With Maidstone always within one score of defeat throughout the second half, Williams kept the side focused on territorial position and sound defence, with his own try proving decisive at the end.

On a warm sunny afternoon, on a hard fast pitch, Maidstone got off to a flying start when awarded a penalty from the kick off, which Jason Smith accepted. But Bromley fought back immediately and, from the restart, worked their way down the pitch through a series of slick back plays. Centre, Wardingly, made the decisive break in the Maidstone 22 and scored by the posts, with the conversion a formality.



With both Bailey leaving the field to treat a cut eye and Jeary joining him shortly thereafter, with a more serious leg injury, the new law governing rolling replacements quickly came into play. Jeary played no further part in the game, with Sam Ellis coming on to replace him, picking up the Man-of-the-Match award for his efforts, but the front row took full advantage, leaving Debnam on for the rest of the game.

Maidstone retook the lead with fifteen minutes gone, No 8, Parker, making the final yard after picking up from the base of a five-yard scrum. Smith again added the extras to secure a 10-7 lead.



Maidstone now had a period of dominance through their forward play, which should have generated at least one more score before a second try eventually arrived. A catch and drive down the right saw play move into the Bromley 22 before the ball was spun left to James Davies on the left wing and he had the simple task of touching down out wide, opening the lead to 15-7.

Bromley used their slick and powerful three quarter line on every occasion open to them, which Maidstone's defence kept to a minimum. But just before the half time whistle, a loose kick from defence allowed Bromley's right wing, Copper, to run the ball back and elude the cover, before getting the touch down after the ball first went loose from a cover tackle. With the conversion, Bromley cut the deficit to a single point on the stroke of half time.



Bromley started the second half with their tails up, with Maidstone looking more disjointed than at any point in the match. But their developing mental toughness kept them in the game and a break by Neil Graves in the centre of the field released Matt Iles to feed Jason Smith for a touchdown wide on the right with twelve minutes on the board.

However, Bromley would not lie down and, with twenty five minutes gone, they scored again to reduce Maidstone's lead to a single point. Indeed, the blatant miss in front of the posts by the Bromley fly-half could have proved extremely costly, especially after the well worked break out try, by Copper again, after an intense sell of Maidstone pressure.

The decisive score came just past the half hour from a scrum just outside the Bromley 22. With Lee Evans moved to No 8, he broke from the base and fed the marauding Ben Williams outside



him, to shrug of two tacklers to get the score out wide.

With a number of injury stops in the second half, a further twenty minutes were available for Bromley to attempt to reverse the score-line. But Maidstone's defence proved fully up to the task and, with a little more assurance, could have built a bigger points margin, themselves.



In summary, a lot of positives can be taken from the game, not least the bonus point for the four tries scored. The pack looks strong and secure but needs to protect the ball better; the three quarters have the speed outside and power in the centre to trouble all defences but could do with a little more guile. Perhaps most importantly, as they play together, they will develop an increasing understanding that will help make those half chances into point scoring affairs.

#### Maidstone XV

Ben Williams; Sam Bailey; Danny Baker; Lee Evans; James Iles: Damian Grabb; Paul Highland; Richard Parker: Nick Jeary (Sam Ellis 11 mins); Willie Brown: Jason Smith; Neil Graves; Dane Smith: James Davies: Matt Iles (Replacements: Debnam - front row; Bunyan – second row)